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**Author:** VUYOLWETHU SANGOTSHA

# BCM reinstates R50m ward allocation

**Projects frozen due to cash-flow pressures can now go ahead**

**VUYOLWETHU SANGOTSHA**

Months after a cash crunch forced Buffalo City Metro to freeze funding for projects, the city has finally reinstated the R50m ward allocation amid fears that it had buckled under pressure from ANC councillors. BCM resorted to putting the brakes on its projects as financial woes deepened in 2022, leading to all 50 wards across the metro waiting longer for their R1m each.

Metro spokesperson Samkelo Ngwenya last week confirmed the reinstatement of the funding, insisting the move was in line with the law.

"The municipality's collection rate fell below the expected level, resulting in reduced available funds for all our funded operational projects," he said.

"This was a stop-gap measure to manage the cash flow at that particular moment. As the financial status affected all operational projects, the municipality adopted an 'urgent and important' approach to implementing operation projects."

The municipality approved its midyear adjustment budget in February. Ngwenya said this allowed operational projects to be implemented as adopted by the council for the current financial year.

"The expenditure of the municipality is guided and legislated by the Municipal Finance Management Act," he said.

"As such, no expenditure will be done outside the established legal framework and as the auditor-general pointed out, we cannot compromise on our strict internal controls."

"The wards use this budget to implement projects that deliver immediate to medium-term benefits. These include ward cleaning, vulnerable group support, youth in sport development and skills development programmes."

"The ward councillors, together with the community and all other interested ward stakeholders, share the responsibility and accountability of decisions taken on how to spend the ward allocation budget."

Shedding light on how the funds were handled, Ngwenya said the municipality had financial control over its budget.

He said all the finances of the municipality were in the custody of the finance directorate.

"The funds allocated to any programme/project for implementation are kept in the of-

ficial and legislated financial institutions," he said.

"These monies are paid to service providers upon completion and/or delivery of goods and services that have been procured through the municipality's supply chain processes. The ward councillor, together with the ward community and interested ward stakeholders, have a responsibility to make decisions on the ward allocation budget."

"This is achieved through a ward general meeting."

The DA in BCM accused the ANC councillors of pressurising the metro into releasing the funding.

DA caucus leader Sue Bentley said: "The ANC ward councillors put much pressure on the CFO in council in January for the budgets to be reinstated — they were stopped because of the financial cash flow crunch [all own-funded projects were stopped] in August 2022."

"As the DA we were surprised that the full million was reinstated in each ward because, though the financial situation has improved slightly, we did not think it had improved enough to reallocate R1m to each of the 50 wards in BCM."

Bentley said the DA ward councillors had planned ahead for how they would allocate the money to benefit the wards.

Ward 23 ANC councillor Sibongile Gulwa said he met with community members last year to set out their priorities.

Gulwa said they would spend their funds on hiring expanded public works programme (EP-WP) workers, beautification, grass cutting and bush clearing as well as sports.

"We have already received part of it, hence workers have already started clearing," he said.

Gulwa is still making follow-ups with the relevant office regarding funding for other initiatives of his ward.

Ward 18 DA councillor Jason McDowell said he had already held all the necessary public ward meetings and all the necessary paperwork was sitting with the department.

"It was decided this year to buy tree and grass cutting equipment," McDowell said.

"This is to try help the parks department keep the ward clear as most of their tools of trade have been stolen, broken or are waiting for maintenance/ parts etc. We are now just waiting for BCM to purchase these items."

All of this equipment is only to be used in ward 18 and we hope this will slowly help catch up with all the public open space backlog."

## In Mourning



Ruth Andrews sheds a tear during Chief Jessica Snowman's funeral service at the Commemoration Methodist Church in Makhanda. See full story on Page 2. Picture: THEO XEPHIA

## Trail of chaos as beachfront overrun by drunken youths

**BOMIKAZI MDIYA**

Residents, businesses and visitors around the East London beachfront were left fuming after hundreds of youths bombarded the area on Saturday evening, leaving a trail of chaos. Police confirmed they had received a complaint of public drinking, while irate business owners relayed the chaos that had ensued.

A manager of a food outlet in the area said they had to close their business earlier than usual as they had struggled to serve their customers because of the mob.

Police spokesperson W/O Majola Nkohl said: "Police can confirm that they received a complaint of public drinking and loud noise at Quigney yesterday [Saturday evening]."

"We had to close down early because we could not control them. Parents should be aware and responsible for their children. Those teens were not supposed to be drinking."

"Why do these underaged teens feel they can drink publicly without any repercussions?"

He said on Sunday morning their cleaning staff had to clean up their premises.

cleaners had their hands full clearing up the booze bottles.

The Dispatch understands the gathering was a planned "pens down" meet-up to celebrate the end of the school term on Friday.

A police officer said the night shift team had their hands full trying to manage the mob of youths, who only started leaving at about 6am on Sunday.

A manager of a food outlet in the area said they had to close their business earlier than usual as they had struggled to serve their customers because of the mob.

"We had to close down early because we could not control them. Parents should be aware and responsible for their children. Those teens were not supposed to be drinking."

"Why do these underaged teens feel they can drink publicly without any repercussions?"

He said on Sunday morning their cleaning staff had to clean up their premises.

SQ Risk SA security site leader Nontobeko Kadani said: "They were rebellious teens who did not want to take instruction and had poor self-conduct when they were outside the local Spar."

"We did not anticipate that it would be busy, but they were coming in and out in numbers and we saw them drinking outside the premises."

Resident Zikhona Mfakadolo said: "I had just come back from work and passed by one of the food outlets to buy a meal. I was greeted by hundreds of teens carrying and drinking alcohol."

"When I questioned them they did not bother to respond, while others were already drunk. This incident is not far from the Enyobeni tavern tragedy and how are they able to buy alcohol at such an age?"

"I am concerned about where they go and how they get home when they are drunk."

She said parents were going around Quigney desperately searching for their children af-

ter word spread about what was happening.

"I do not know how can this be stopped. It is concerning."

Nomtha Gavula of Bisho, who had visited one of the beachfront hotels, was alarmed by teens who caused chaos on the roads.

"When I visited the bottle store, there was a queue to get in."

"I was approached by teens who could not enter because they are underage and wanted me to buy them alcohol. I was shocked and refused."

"But that did not stop them. Adults outside the shop were being given money by these teens to buy on their behalf."

"You could see they were determined to drink more, as they carried plastic glasses and cool drink mixes."

"When I tried to reprimand them, they kept on saying 'Do not judge us, as you do not even know us'."

"I was trying to help. It seems like they learnt nothing from

the Enyobeni tragedy."

Last month, the Dispatch reported on similar scenes that unfolded at a sports festival hosted by Grens High School in Baysville.

Principals from Cambridge High, Hudson Park High, Beaconhurst High, Clarendon High School for Girls, Stirling High, Grens Hoërskool, Port Rex Technical High and Selborne College issued a joint statement afterwards calling on parents to step up to ensure their children were safe.

"Our appeal is for parents to become more aware of where their children are, who their friends are, who they are staying over with and where they are once the sports matches are over."

"As principals and educators, we can take responsibility for the children only while they are on our premises."

Eastern Cape Liquor Board spokesperson Mgwabi Msiya condemned the latest incident.

The board has been on an aggressive awareness campaign including an "anti-pens-down" one since the Enyobeni tragedy last June.

The underage drinking followed a recent incident that took place on Saturday evening at the beachfront in Quigney that they were unaware of.

"We strongly condemn any form of underage drinking and do urge parents to be very vigilant in monitoring the movements of their children."

"We believe the scourge of underage drinking in our communities calls for a collective effort among members of society, including parents."

"The best way to deal with this social problem is for parents at the level of families to take responsibility by closely monitoring their children."

"Parents must also look into the amount of pocket money they give their children."

"In some instances parents give their children excessive pocket money, making it easy for them to purchase alcohol."